SAMPLE PERSUASIVE SPEECH: RACIAL PROFILING
(Jennifer Sweeney, Tallahassee Florida, 2000)

Accusations of racial prejudice by police officers sparked riots in the 1960's, grand juries in the 70's and disorder in the 80's. Now, in the year 2000 the prejudice has moved from accusation to blatant reality. A reality that unfortunately has always existed, but can no longer be ignored. In the past, terms for stereotyping of this nature included prejudiced or racist, but now there is a new term. Minorities refer to it as DWB, driving while black. Politicians call it racial profiling. According to The Los Angeles Times March 10, 2000, racial profiling is the police practice of singling out minorities for questioning at airports, on highways, and on the street. This problem is not isolated, it is a coast to coast epidemic, and anyone with any color is a potential victim. According to a June 9, 1999 speech in Washington D.C., President Clinton referred to racial profiling as, "a morally indefensible deeply corrosive practice, that has affected members of Congress, students, doctors, even off-duty police officers." This speech is not about fixing the one system at fault, it's about an attitudinal change that is necessary on a national scale. This issue should touch all of us, even those in the majority, because if it doesn't that only reinforces the magnitude of the problem. In order to end these crimes against color we must first, paint an accurate picture of the problem, then explore the causes and, finally establish solutions that will erase the practice of racial profiling.

Perhaps the most distressing fact about racial profiling, is that we aren't shocked by it. Typical reactions include denying its existence or accepting it as a mere fact of life. Neither reaction is appropriate. First, it does exist. According to The Denver Post, February 27, 2000, New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman admitted after an internal investigation that state troopers had engaged in racial profiling when deciding which cars to stop on the highway. New Jersey resident Dr. Elmo Randolph has been pulled over on his way to work fifty times yet he has never been issued a ticket. The police approach his gold BMW and request his license and registration. The officers involved are always white and Dr. Randolph is always black. According to Newsweek, May 17, 1999 officers will park along the road and shine their headlights into passing cars, looking for minorities to pull over. Then they radio ahead to fellow officers that, "a carload of coal, or a group of porch monkeys is headed their way." However racial profiling is not limited to local agencies and highways. The September 13, 1999 edition of The New Republic explains that after getting off of a plane in Kansas City a young man was taken into custody and questioned by DEA officers. When asked to explain their reasons for stopping him one officer declared, "The young man was black." According to The Chicago Sun-Times, March 12, 2000 blacks, Hispanics, or any people of color are five times more likely to be stopped than whites. New Jersey and Kansas are not alone, law enforcement agencies in Michigan, California, and Florida have openly admitted that some of their officers have specifically targeted minorities. Studies have been performed along highways across America, The NAACP has launched a campaign against it, even President Clinton has been in support of abolishing racial profiling; that's a lot of attention to something that doesn't exist.

The second aspect of the problem is acceptance that racial profiling is just the way things are. How often have we been pulled over for apparently no reason? We weren't speeding or weaving. Maybe our car looked too expensive, maybe we didn't fit the norm for the neighborhood? Chances are, never, particularly if we're white. Docile acceptance comes from members of the majority. The Chicago Sun-Times, March 8, 2000 states that some reactions to racial profiling include, "If they're innocent why should they worry about being stopped by police." This is a predictable response from people who never have to put up with it. Racial profiling cannot be accepted as a fact of life. It is a dangerous erosion of a basic American right, the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. If this right was denied across the board to members of the majority we would immediately be able to understand. The fact that it isn't only proves the point. Now that we have examined the two main problems of racial profiling we can move on to explore the causes of each of those problems.

First, racial profiling is caused in part by overextending the boundaries of ordinary profiling. The Los Angeles Times, July 23, 1999, explains that profiling, is an effective tool for law enforcement, nuns are less
likely to smuggle drugs than most people. *The New York Times Magazine*, June 18,1999, clarifies, "profiling means an officer using cumulative knowledge to identify certain indicators criminal activity. Race may be one of those factors but it cannot stand alone. Racial profiling is when race is the only factor. There is no other probable cause." It is the blurring of the line between the two types of profiling that is problematic.

Second, the cause of the apathetic attitude towards racial profiling is painfully easy to explain. Minorities are viewed as unequal. This is not a new argument it has been around for centuries. The relevance is that there is still a problem. *The Los Angeles Times*, March 5, 2000, explains that racial profiling is racism rationalized by a basic fear of "the other." There is a problem to be worked through and neither denial nor acceptance is part of the solution.

Now that we have examined the problem and its causes we can move on to explore solutions on both the governmental and personal level to erase the practice of racial profiling. Current news like *The National Journal*, March 4, 2000, suggests that the problem is under control. The article explains that The House Judiciary Committee recently approved legislation which directs state and local law enforcement agencies to collect race data from people they stop or arrest. However, don't be fooled. *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15, 2000, states that while this is clearly a move in the right direction, data collection is not enough to stop unfair police practices. Instead the key on a governmental level is accountability. Officers in any law enforcement capacity, regardless of previous service history, or time with the company must be held responsible when they commit acts of racial profiling. Within law enforcement agencies there has to be the attitude that misconduct will not be tolerated. *U.S. News and World Report*, March 29, 1999, edition, that agencies in South Bronx, Los Angeles, and Boston have seen a drop in racial profiling complaints since 1993. The drop is attributed to commanders of those divisions requiring their officers to treat residents with respect. These departments hold regular training sessions to educate the officers and the public. Even the Tallahassee Police department is taking action to combat racial profiling. In a telephone interview yesterday afternoon I discovered that Sargent Cheryl Stewart organizes a group of officers that travel around to different schools in the area, explaining to them what racial profiling is and what it can do. The goal is both, to educate potential offenders and change their mind set early, as well as explaining to minorities that not all officers need to be feared. In both cases these visits help bridge the gap between citizens and police. If you live here in the Tallahassee area or you just have more questions about the program you can contact Sargent Stewart at 904-891-4266. This type of leadership needs to spread throughout the country. Since law enforcement agencies are such a part of the problem, it seems fitting they would take an active role in the solution.

However, we cannot lay all of the blame on the police. As members of society we all shoulder some of the responsibility. The bottom line is that no amount of data collection, or legislation, or writing our congress person, or being cooperative if we're pulled over will actually change the bias attitude that lies at the heart of racial profiling. Those solution only work on paper. In the real world ending racial profiling is dependent on individuals taking a stand against it. In the beginning I mentioned that this speech was about an attitudinal change on a national scale. Am I really up here tackling the enormous issue of racism? Yes. It is the most offensive issue plaguing our society today and we have to power to end it. The solution is simple, we have to change the way we think. We have a responsibility to act once we've been informed of the problem. Previous ambivalence can be forgiven in the wake of current action. We have the power to change our attitudes and influence the attitudes of the next generation, whether we are parents or teachers, friends or teammates. I know, in persuasion we look for an action step. In this case the action is changing our minds. There is no kit I can pass out at the end of the speech, I don't have a magic 1-800 number that will end racism. However, this solution is one that can be implemented immediately, because it's so simple. We don't need preparation time or tools. This solution is only dependent on individuals taking action. See, modern racism is not about acting racist, it's about thinking that way, and changing the way we think is something we can all do on our own. Social change happens, not when millions of people gather together, it's before that when all of those people decided individually that a change needed to occur.

Today we have explored the crime of racial profiling and its causes. The main solution is simple, it relies on us. This community has the potential to create change. Look at the number of people who can become aware today and start making a difference tomorrow. Make racial profiling unacceptable. In this case the solution really is in our hands. Lead by example. Let changing our minds lead to changing our actions.
Teach your children, hold a rally, tell a friend, vote. How we choose to create change is up to the individual, that a change is necessary, well that should be understood.